

2004 King County Comprehensive Plan Update

Area Zoning Study

Department of Development and Environmental Services

Study Area: East Fairwood/McGarvey Park

Summary

This area of approximately 53 acres is currently designated a Rural Residential area in the King County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and zoned RA-2.5-SO, Rural Residential – one home per 2.5 acres within a special district overlay.

This area was studied for possible redesignation to Urban.

It is recommended that the land use designation for the area not be changed, that it remain Rural Residential, with the existing zoning of RA-2.5-SO.

Background

Formerly a Nike missile facility, land use in the study area is restricted to education purposes in accordance with agreements made at the time the area was transferred from Federal ownership. The study area is composed of three parcels, as shown in the attached maps and parcel list. The bulk of the area consists of a large parcel containing abandoned missile silos, which is proposed for development to expand a private school existing on the adjacent parcel in the northeast part of the study area. Another parcel, located in the northwest part of the study area, is being acquired from Kent School District and would also be included in the school expansion project. The development envisioned by property owners would require that the area be redesignated Urban.

The study area is adjacent to the Woodside neighborhood, and is surrounded on three sides by permanent open space created by a “Four to One” subdivision.

When this proposal was brought up for public comment, there was considerable protest by homeowners in the new Woodside at McGarvey Park development located immediately west of the study area. The primary concern of neighbors is that as new homebuyers they believed that the area east of their development was designated as permanent open space. They fear that urban development in the study area would impact the natural beauty and resources of the area and possibly reduce property values and quality of life for Woodside residents.

Neighbors are also concerned that new urban development in the study area would overburden the infrastructure in the Woodside area. They believe that when Woodside infrastructure was planned, it was assumed that the study area would remain rural. In particular, residents worry that traffic on the neighborhood streets would become congested, as they would provide the most convenient access to the study area.

Applicable Countywide Planning Policies:

LU-7 Designated Rural Areas are considered to be permanent and shall not be redesignated to an Urban Growth Area until reviewed pursuant to the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130 (3)) and policy FW-1. Future growth should be accommodated to the maximum extent feasible by efficient use of existing urban land within the Urban Growth Area. Annexation of Rural Areas to cities shall be prohibited. When annexation of Rural Areas is necessary to link two Urban Areas, that intervening Rural Area shall be designated as permanent urban separator at low rural densities.

Applicable King County Comprehensive Plan Policies:

U- 102 The Urban Growth Area designations shown on the official Land Use Map includes enough land to provide the capacity to accommodate growth expected over the period 1992-2012. These lands should include only those lands that meet the following criteria:

- a. Are characterized by urban development which can be efficiently and cost effectively served by roads, water, sanitary sewer and storm drainage, schools and other urban governmental services within the next 20 years;
- b. Do not extend beyond natural boundaries, such as watersheds, which impede provision of urban services;
- c. Respect topographical features which form a natural edge such as rivers and ridge lines;
- d. Are sufficiently free of environmental constraints to be able to support urban growth without major environmental impacts unless such areas are designated as an urban separator by interlocal agreement between jurisdictions;
- e. Are included within the Bear Creek Urban Planned Development (UPD) sites; and
- f. Are not rural land or unincorporated agricultural or forestry lands designated through the Countywide Planning Policies plan process.

R- 103 King County's Rural Area is considered to be permanent and shall not be redesignated to an Urban Growth Area until reviewed pursuant to the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130(3) and Countywide Planning Policy FW-1.

Analysis:

Recently, King County and the cities within the county completed a detailed assessment of the development capacity within our Urban Growth Area, as envisioned by the Growth Management Act and the Countywide Planning Policies. This assessment, known as the "Buildable Lands Report," indicates there is sufficient development capacity within our Urban Growth Area to accommodate forecast growth for at least the next 10 years.

In addition, there are significant concerns regarding road access to the study area. There are three options to provide access, and all three are problematic. Currently, access is by a private road through the designated open space and Rural Area that would not support Urban traffic. Property owners along this private road who attended our public meeting indicated they opposed use of the private road for expanded school access. The most likely route would be through the Woodside neighborhood, which residents believe would adversely affect their community. The only other option appears to be to build a new road through dedicated open space, which is inconsistent with County policy.

The study area is adjacent to the Potential Annexation Area (PAA) for the City of Renton. If the study area was redesignated Urban, it would also be included within Renton's PAA. No evidence has been submitted to indicate the City of Renton supports expansion of their PAA in this area.

Conclusion:

The land use map and zoning amendments requested in the study area are not consistent with Countywide Planning Policy LU-7 and King County Comprehensive Plan Policy R-103 because there already exists sufficient capacity within the Urban Area to support growth targets.

The requested amendments are inconsistent with King County Comprehensive Plan Policy R-102, because the area is not characterized by urban development and cannot be efficiently served by urban services.

A private road and a Rural level of public services adequately serve the existing uses in the study area.

Urban development in this study area would adversely affect surrounding Rural land and open space, as well as the Urban neighborhood to the west.

For these reasons, there is no justification to redesignate these Rural properties to Urban.

Executive Staff Recommendation:

No proposed changes to the Rural land use designation or zoning in the study area.